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All The Rave: The Rise And Fall Of Shawn Fanning's Napster



Synopsis

The definitive inside account of the file-sharing revolution that overthrew the music industry, "All the Rave" reveals the family betrayal, greed and mismanagement that hijacked one of the most fundamental innovations of the Internet era. Named one of the three best books of 2003 by Investigative Reporters and Editors Inc., "All the Rave" has been out of print until now and unavailable in most electronic formats. Author and veteran technology journalist Joseph Menn also wrote 2010's "Fatal System Error: The Hunt for the New Crime Lords who are Bringing Down the Internet." Reviews for "All the Rave": "The book, by Joseph Menn, provides a well-documented history of one of the most celebrated collapses of the Internet. But it goes far deeper, giving an inside account of the creation of Napster, the battle for its control and the maneuvering by big Silicon Valley names to try to turn music piracy into gold." -- The New York Times "That rare business book that nicely avoids either hatchet job or hagiography." -- San Francisco Chronicle "An admirable piece of reporting, of interest to both friends and foes of the movement Napster helped to create." -- The Washington Post "Menn's revelations are startling...the best seat yet to the online music revolution." -- Newsweek "An engrossing and utterly coruscating history of the original Napster that deserves to be ranked as one of the two great books written about the dot-com bubble, alongside Michael Wolf's Burn Rate." -- The Register At age seventeen, Shawn Fanning designed a computer program that transformed the Internet into an unlimited library of free music. Future Facebook President Sean Parker, to be immortalized in "The Social Network" a decade later, joined him as a co-founder of Napster Inc. Tens of millions of young people quickly signed on, Time magazine put Fanning on its cover, and Napster became a household name. It did not take long for the music industry to declare war, one that would engulfed the biggest entertainment and technology companies on the planet. Despite the mass media coverage that came with the revolution and Fanning's status as the first widely admired hacker, no one outside the firm grasped who owned the company or what its real strategy was. The full tale, revealed only here, shows that the venture money credited with spreading Internet technology worldwide also corrupted its evolution, triggering a backlash that is still reverberating ten years later. For "All the Rave," Joseph Menn gained unprecedented access to Fanning, Parker, other key Napster and music executives, reams of internal emails, unpublished court records, and other resources. The result is the definitive account of the Napster saga, for the first time disclosing secret takeover and settlement talks, the unseen role of Shawn's uncle in controlling Napster, and hidden agendas and infighting from Napster's trenches to the top ranks of the German media giant Bertelsmann. Spiced with sex, drugs and rock and roll, "All the Rave" is a riveting account of genius and greed, visionary leaps and

disastrous business decisions, and the clash of the hacker and investor cultures with that of the copyright establishment.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Here we have a voluminous history of the Napster phenomenon, but only from a certain jaundiced angle. As a critical outside journalist, Joseph Menn was unable to directly interview some of the principal players in the saga, and often relies on legal documentation. In turn, much of his research is based on secondary sources and hearsay from people not directly involved in the events described. This all taints many parts of the book and reduces its believability. We do get a good rundown of the genesis of Napster, as teenage computer whiz Shawn Fanning and some ambitious hacker friends had a brilliant idea about music file sharing, which then got far more monstrous than anyone could have ever expected. Menn then spends most of the book describing the byzantine investment deals and corporate wheeling and dealing to launch the doomed Napster corporation, in ways that were preposterous even during the dot-com bubble. In the end, enthusiastic people with great ideas tried to cash in, and watched forlornly as others let everything crash and burn. These investigations by Menn are initially informative but descend into a tiresome swamp of nitpicking and

unnecessary details that detract from the more interesting cultural ramifications of the Napster craze. And the biggest problem is that Menn gets very personal, especially when describing the business executives who got involved in Napster after its incorporation - piling on criticisms from other people who are clearly not neutral observers, and dwelling uselessly on people's love lives and personal transgressions. This goes especially for an apparent personal vendetta that Menn seems to have against John Fanning, Shawn's uncle and business strategist who muscled his way into prominence based on his nephew's invention.

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